

Volume 10, Issue 2-2013

Late Spring 2013

# Northwest Native Plant Journal

A Monthly Web Magazine

Birds, bugs and bushes..p22

Hummers: elusive jewels..p53

Unusual backyard birds..p12

Theme gardens:

Faery Garden..p8

Rain Garden..p10

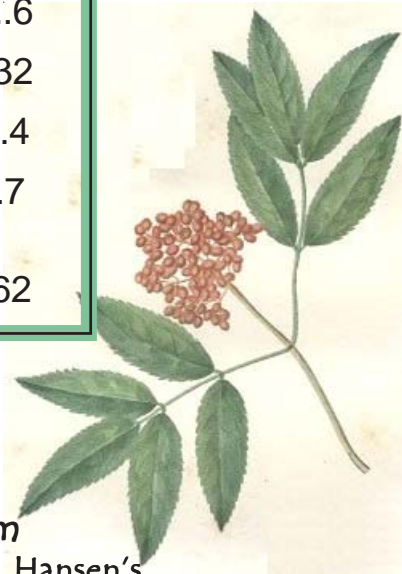
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# Contents

## In Every Issue

About this Journal.....	3
Garden chores to do now..	....5
Mystery plant puzzle.....	....6
Native plant web resources..	32
On the Cover.....	4
Wildlife Corner.....	7
This 'n That Notes from Jennifer....	62

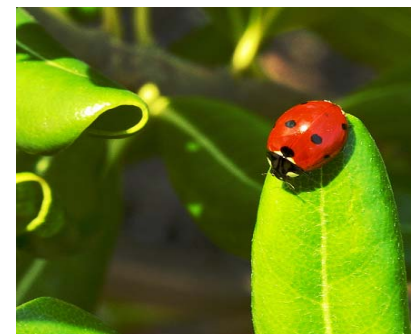
Editor: Jennifer Rehm  
Webmaster for The Wild Garden: Hansen's  
Northwest Native Plant Database  
[www.nwplants.com](http://www.nwplants.com)  
e-Mail: [nwplants@gmail.com](mailto:nwplants@gmail.com)  
[www.chillirose.com](http://www.chillirose.com)



## Feature Articles

### Birds, bugs and bushes

A cooperative approach to garden-  
ing in the Pacific NW..22



### Hummers: elusive jewels

Tripping the light fantastic...53



### Theme gardens

Faery Garden...8

Rain Garden...10



### Unusual backyard birds

Too many, too few or just  
NIMBY...12



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# About this Journal

This Journal was created under the direction of Wally Hansen – a dedicated Grower, Aficionado and Passionate Lover of Northwest Native Plants.

This Journal is not 'commercial.' Our goals are:

- A** — To generate interest, even passion, concerning the magnificent Native Plants of the Pacific Northwest.
- B** — To help you create your own Native Plant Gardens, large or small, for home or work.
- C** — To help you propagate and "grow on" those species that interest you the most.
- D** — To inform both Home Gardeners and interested Professionals of many disciplines concerning trends and news items from my little corner of the world.
- E** — To help the reader enjoy native plants more by understanding the historical and cultural role of native plants (i.e.—use by Native Americans, pioneers, early botanists, etc.).

Green Manzanita  
(*Arctostaphylos patula*)  
Photo by Nona



# On the Cover: Cedar Waxwing

## Natural Courtship

Cedar Waxwings (*Bombycilla cedrorum*) are members of the family Bombycillidae or waxwing family of passerine (perching) birds.

They are year-round inhabitants in the Pacific northwest.

During courtship the male and female will sit together and pass small objects back and forth, such as flower petals or an insect. Mating pairs will sometimes rub their beaks together affectionately.

This photo by Minette Layne stole my heart, and she was kind enough to share it here in this issue of our journal.



Photo by Minette Layne





# Chores in the native garden



1 – Plant! As far as gardening seasons go, spring is definitely the ‘big easy.’

- ✦ Soil is soft, not yet baked solid, easy to dig.
- ✦ Weeds are easiest to pull right now while they are young and have not yet gone to seed.
- ✦ Regular soft rain gets moisture to fresh plantings.
- ✦ Weather is temperate with many partly sunny, warm days.
- ✦ Native plant sales are happening now--good prices for robust, healthy plants and nice selection.

2 – Create or care for your garden rooms. A place to get outdoors in comfort will make your heart sing.

- ✦ A shady cove protected from wind and/or rain.
- ✦ Seating near fragrant plants, a combination of perennials, shrubs and trees.
- ✦ A private spot to take a nap.
- ✦ A small area of serenity where you can pause a few minutes to regain or expand your personal peace.

If possible, a comfy place where you can sleep outside. Do you dare?

Shade or sun porches often work for this. It must be secluded and

- ✦ sheltered from inclement weather and intruders, be they bugs or stray cats or uninvited humans.

A ‘wildlife blind.’ Taking a tip from hunters and photographers, set up a comfortable area where you can watch birds and bees and butterflies without disturbing them. You’ll become much more acquainted with wildlife when you observe them in a natural habitat.



**The official Earth Day was April 22, but honoring the earth can be any day: celebrate by planting a native tree, shrub or perennial in your yard.**

# Mystery plant puzzle



Photo by Nona

Test your native plant knowledge-- identify this wildflower. The reward is simple but very satisfying: You will be included in our list of Official Plant Detectives.

Send me an email ([nwplants@gmail.com](mailto:nwplants@gmail.com)) with the correct botanical name of this plant.

**Good luck!**

**P.S. Do you have a plant you'd like to identify? Email it to us and we'll show it here on our Mystery Plant Puzzle page.**

## Official Plant Detectives

Jerry Murray  
Sabrina Kis  
Carol Hiler  
Mike Burns  
Nancy Whitehead  
Pat Opdyke  
Luke Kishpaugh  
Dave Whitehead





# Wildlife Corner

## Out back with the animals

Our wildlife habitat here at home is more fun every day. The plants we added recently will give delicious native edibles all year long. There will probably remain a need for the feeding stations, thistle feeders, nectars and platform feeders.

There is sufficient shelter now with all the rhodies, azaleas, birches, and the arborvitaes.

The one area that is not up to snuff is water. We have a small still pond, two birdbaths that are not yet filled, and one shallow birdbath with a cinder block topped with a shallow bowl giving two levels of water for small bird splashing.

I'm thinking about creating a larger pond in the faery garden. There is a small mound right in the middle of this space with a depression all the way around it. The edges of the garden rise above this bowl-shaped area. In my mind's eye, I see a circular pond around a little island where butterflies can sun themselves and little frogs can rest in safety from predators. Needless to say, visiting faeries should find this garden purely enchanting.



Photo by Nona



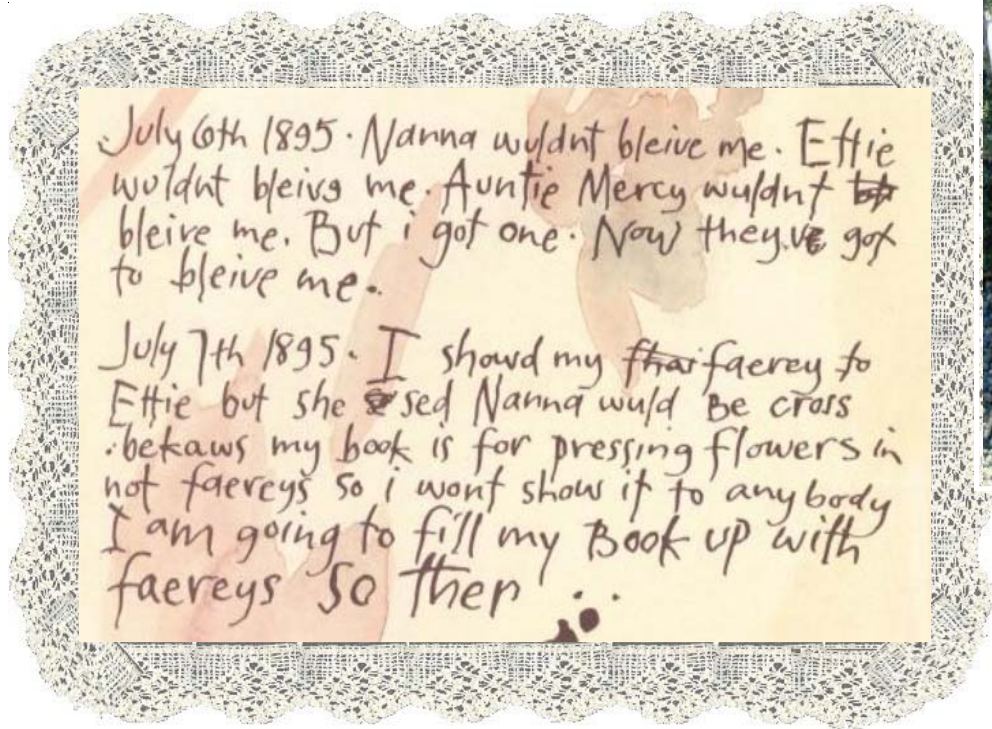


# Faery Garden

## Light hearted fantasy

This is something of a sticky wicket because some folks believe in faeries and some do not. So, making a faery garden might best be a personal endeavour. One could always pretend.

Ready to fly? I have a book that can put you in the right frame of mind. I bought mine at Barnes & Noble many years back. It's titled *Lady Cottington's Pressed Fairy Book* by Terry Jones and Brian Froud. An excerpt written by Lady Cottington's own hand:



July 6th 1895. Nanna wuldnt bleive me. Ettie wuldnt bleive me. Auntie Mercy wuldnt ~~be~~ bleive me. But i got one. Now they've got to bleive me.

July 7th 1895. I shoud my ~~thai~~ faerey to Ettie but she ~~sed~~ Nanna wuld be cross bekaws my book is for pressing flowers in not faereys so i wont show it to anybody I am going to fill my Book up with faereys so ther



Fairy Lantern (*Prosartes smithii*) and Bleeding Heart (*Dicentra formosa*) are good for the shady fairy garden, either in ground or a repurposed birdbath.



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# Faery Garden, continued

Furniture & tiny props are used by some. I prefer a more magical theme--the glimpse of a wing, the sound of a tiny bell, something just out of sight.

Appropriate plants: Mahala Mat (*Ceanothus prostratus*), Bleeding Heart (*Dicentra formosa* ssp. *formosa*), Twinflower (*Linnaea borealis* var. *longiflora*), Star-Flowered Solomon's Seal (*Maianthemum stellata*), Alpine Forget-Me-Not (*Myosotis alpestris*), Hooker's or Smith's Fairybells (*Prosartes hookeri* or *p. smithii*), Dwarf Huckleberry (*Vaccinium caespitosum*), or Evergreen Violet (*Viola sempervirens*).

Moss is a whimsical ground cover for this venue, especially those with small leaves and even tiny flowers.

Solar lights come in all sizes and shapes but if your garden is woodland style, they probably won't work very well.



Faery garden au naturel with Mahala Mat (*Ceanothus prostratus*), Alpine Forget-Me-Not (*Myosotis alpestris*) Photo credit: Andrew Kratz and USDA Forest Service and Twinflower (*Linnaea borealis*). At left, an inconspicuous nod to make-believe by affixing a small door, lantern and window frames to a tree background.





# Rain Gardens

## Applaud northwest springtime!

Simply put, a Rain Garden transforms a low place in the garden into a filtration system that provides excess water to plants and shrubs situated to take advantage of this natural phenomenon instead of directing that extra water to a water supply such as reservoir or lake or stream. This simple idea of ecological engineering can give dynamic results for little capitol outlay.

Water that runs off your roof, driveway, walkway or other hard areas around your home is collected like a sponge and slowly filtered into the ground before it becomes polluted stormwater runoff, resulting in healthier urban waterways and habitats.

Plants that work effectively include:

Sitka Alder (*Alnus viridis* ssp. *sinuata*), Baldhip Rose (*Rosa gymnocarpa*), Red Osier Dogwood (*Cornus sericea*), Rosemary (*Rosemarinus officianalis*), Dagger-Leaf Rush (*Juncus ensifolius*), Taper-Tipped Rush (*Juncus acuminatus*), Dense Sedge (*Carex densa*) and Slough Sedge (*Carex obnupto*), Coastal Strawberry (*Frageria chiloensis*), Common Camas (*Camassia quamash*).

See the Oregon Rain Garden Guide: A step-by-step guide to landscaping for clean water and healthy streams. <http://seagrant.oregonstate.edu/sgpubs/onlinepubs/h10001.pdf>

Oregon Metro also has excellent information at [www.oregonmetro.gov/index.cfm/go/by.web/id=25102](http://www.oregonmetro.gov/index.cfm/go/by.web/id=25102)

The Low Impact Development Center offers Rain Garden Design Templates, [www.lowimpactdevelopment.org/raingarden\\_design/whatisaraingarden.html](http://www.lowimpactdevelopment.org/raingarden_design/whatisaraingarden.html).

Common  
Camas  
(*Camassia*  
*quamash*)



Well-healed rain  
garden at Balam  
Estate, photo  
credit: Rogersoh.



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# Rain Garden, continued

At right is a shared rain garden that benefits both neighbors. The downspout from each house is directed to this low area

which has been planted with fine wetland plants that will use the moisture to produce more "green."

Photo credit: Brian Ash on English Wikipedia



The Better Living Show website, [www.betterlivingshow.org/blog.choosing-plants-for-pacific-northwest-rain-gardens.htm](http://www.betterlivingshow.org/blog.choosing-plants-for-pacific-northwest-rain-gardens.htm), has lists of plants for various environments.

Baltic Rush (*Juncus balticus*), Baldhip Rose (*Rosa gymnocarpa*), Dagger-Leaf Rush (*Juncus ensifolius*)



# Unusual Birds for Backyard Habitats

## Too many, too few or just NIMBY (Not In My BackYard)

The Pacific northwest is home to a plethora of birds. For the most part, we welcome them into our yards because they are beautiful to see, their antics are captivating to watch, their songs are delightful, and some species present all three esthetics and more. They eat bugs and they distribute seeds in unlikely places.

Aside from the robins, wrens, sparrows, finches, etc., some birds visit us unexpectedly even though our backyard habitats and generous feeding stations were not intended to draw them into our lives. In some cases this is a joyful surprise. In others, it's pure chagrin. And once in a while we are stunned into jaw-dropping awe. Such is the case of our first unusual drop-in, the mighty eagles. This excerpt from Oregon's Department of Fish and Wildlife publication titled Oregon's Raptors:

*"The size and beauty of bald eagles have made them the best known birds of prey. If actions speak louder than appearances, however, the bald eagle is somewhat less than regal. Bald eagles will eat whatever is available. Much of their diet consists of carrion, or dead meat, particularly dead fish, and though they are capable of catching fresh prey, bald eagles are much more likely to steal a fish than to search for one directly. A favorite trick is to wait until an osprey, struggling under the weight of a freshly caught fish, is enroute to its nest, and then attack. The smaller osprey will be forced to release its catch and the eagle will then either catch it in the air or land to enjoy the snack."*



Photo credit: W. Lloyd MacKenzie, via Flickr @ [http://www.flickr.com/photos/saffron\\_blaze/](http://www.flickr.com/photos/saffron_blaze/)

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# Unusual Birds for Backyard Habitats, continued

*"Habitat destruction, illegal shooting and use of pesticides drastically reduced the number of bald eagles in the mid-20 century. Since that time they have been making a good comeback, but they are still listed as a threatened species in Oregon. Some bald eagles are year-round residents and nest in Oregon and others that nest further north migrate into the state during the winter months. Oregon's Klamath Basin has a large wintering concentration, making that area a popular eagle watching spot. The largest concentrations of bald eagles are found in Alaska."*

*"Although not decorated with the striking black and white contrasts of bald eagles, golden eagles are perhaps a better symbol of birds of prey. Confident and capable hunters, golden eagles rarely feed on carrion, getting the bulk of their food through attacks on mammals of various sizes, including young livestock and big game species."*

*"Golden eagles are year-round state residents and are commonly found in the mountains and high desert country of eastern Oregon."*



Eagles on the wing  
Photo by Nona

[⇒ More ⇒](#)

# Unusual Birds for Backyard Habitats, continued

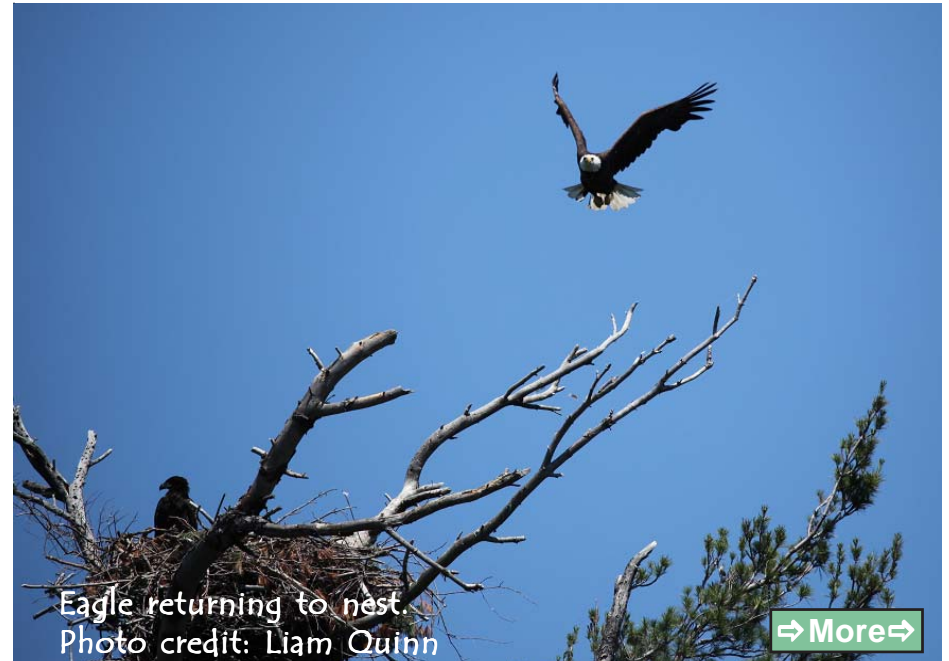
During breeding season, the male and female work together to build a nest of sticks, usually located at the top of a tree. The nests can weigh up to a ton and measure up to 8 feet across. Once paired, bald eagles remain with each other until one mate dies, then the surviving bird will find another mate. They mate sometime between late September to early April. From their dance of love the first egg will be laid from 5 to 10 days later. The clutch is usually from 1-3 eggs and is cared for by both parents.

Near the little town of Independence, Oregon, live a pair of bald eagles who have nested there for many years. During this time, they've successfully added several new birds to the eagle population. Oftentimes I've seen them gliding across the sky in search of food or simply celebrating the blue sky as they soar high above.

Another eagle story was told to me by a gardener friend. Along the fence row between her yard and the neighbors, there was a row of mature shrubbery which was kept sort of trimmed to 6 ft or so. One morning she went out to greet the day and found herself face to face with a bald eagle who was perched on a solid branch of this hedge. Not wanting to disturb the eagle, she immediately froze, then walked very slowly back into the house. She watched through a window as the bird finally spread its wings and flew away.



Eagles nesting site near Independence, Oregon.  
Photo from video by Waterskippers



Eagle returning to nest.  
Photo credit: Liam Quinn

[⇒ More ⇒](#)



# Unusual Birds for Backyard Habitats, continued

## Cowbird

**Species:** Brown-headed— spring/summer/fall

Unlike most birds, female cowbirds don't bother building nests. Instead, they deposit their eggs (often more than three dozen a summer) into nests of other birds. They abandon the young, relying on the foster parents to raise them. The host birds may or may not notice the intruders, and their reactions take different forms. They may desert the nest, they may physically kick them out of the nest or they may endeavour to rear them with their own offspring which many times overwhelms the host and the hatchlings do not survive.

Once confined to the open grasslands of middle North America, cowbirds have surged in numbers and range as humans built towns.

Cowbirds forage on the ground, often following grazing animals such as horses and cows to catch **insects** stirred up by the larger animals. They mainly eat **seeds and insects**. I do not know of any native plant preferences for this bird.



Female Brown-headed Cowbird  
Photo credit:  
Lee Karney, US  
Fish & Wildlife  
Service

Male Brown-headed Cowbird  
Photo credit:  
Beargoldenretriever



[⇒ More ⇒](#)

# Unusual Birds for Backyard Habitats, continued

## **Wild Turkey, *Meleagris gallopavo***

Not usually considered a backyard bird, the wild turkeys here in the Pacific northwest are a curious combination of wildlife and food source and, yes, they are often backyard visitors in areas where they hang out. If you live in such an area, you may or may not welcome them to your garden but they will come whether you are ready or not.

Consider this question carefully before you jump. Toms (male turkeys) measure 36 to 48 inches long and weigh 17 to 28 pounds. Wing-span on a large tom may be over four feet. Hens measure 26 to 34 inches and 8 to 12 pounds. They can run over 20 miles per hour and fly up to speeds of 40 miles per hour. These birds are fierce, and the toms have some serious spurs behind their feet which are used in battle.

They seem to have no respect for humans except during hunting season. They'll come right up on the patio and peck at the door. On the road they proceed at their own pace regardless of autos honking or cursing.

Hens on a dinner forage.  
Photo by Nona.



[⇒ More ⇒](#)



# Unusual Birds for Backyard Habitats, continued

Wild turkeys eat just about anything found on the ground or in a shrub or a small tree. Acorns, nuts, hazel, chestnut, hickory, and pinyon pine as well as various seeds, berries such as juniper and bearberry, roots and insects. Sometimes they eat amphibians and small reptiles such as lizards and snakes. They will feed in cow pastures, backyard bird feeders, and croplands after harvest. Turkeys are also known to eat a wide variety of grasses.

Bruce Dugger and associates, on behalf of Oregon State University, are conducting in-depth research to determine exactly what wild turkeys eat. See [www.fwl.oregonstate.edu/labs/dugger/html/turkey-research.html](http://www.fwl.oregonstate.edu/labs/dugger/html/turkey-research.html) for their findings.

From a letter written to his daughter, Benjamin Franklin compares the Bald Eagle to the Wild Turkey:

*"For in Truth the Turkey is in Comparison a much more respectable Bird, and withal a true original Native of America... He is besides, though a little vain & silly, a Bird of Courage, and would not hesitate to attack a Grenadier of the British Guards who should presume to invade his Farm Yard with a red Coat on."*



# Unusual Birds for Backyard Habitats, continued

## Swift

**Species:** Vaux's—spring/summer/fall in chimneys and open sky

The Vaux's Swift might be thought of as a Pacific NW breeding specialty, occurring from SE Alaska across southern British Columbia and northern Idaho, south in the wooded mountains into central California. They winter mostly from southern Mexico to Panama. However, there are also non-migratory Vaux's Swifts in Mexico, Panama, and northern Venezuela. These are sometimes considered a separate species, Dusky-backed Swift, *Chaetura richmondi*.

Vaux's Swifts arrive in the latter half of April in the Pacific NW and form large migratory flocks in September as they head south. Large migratory flocks of swifts roost at night in brick chimneys.

One famous roost is in downtown Portland at the Chapman Elementary School. The "Chapman swifts" are part of a migratory population of Vaux's Swifts that roost seasonally in the chimney of Chapman Elementary School in Portland, Oregon. This is North America's largest concentration of Vaux's Swifts.

Every evening from mid-August to mid-October, thousands of swifts gather in the sky over the school shortly before sunset. Count estimates of 1,700 to 35,000 swifts have been reported. Shortly after sunset, over a period of 10 to 30 minutes, they fly into the top of the brick chimney (constructed c.1925) to roost on the interior surface until they depart at sunrise. The school is on the birds' migratory route to their wintering sites in southern Central America and Venezuela. This has become quite the local spectacle, and problem, with some 400-2000 people visiting each night to watch, according to the Audubon Society of Portland.



Vaux in flight  
Photo credit: Billy Lindblom

[⇒ More ⇒](#)



# Unusual Birds for Backyard Habitats, continued

The birds began using the site in the early 1980s in response to the loss of much of their natural roosting habitat — old growth Douglas-fir and forest snags. Vaux's Swifts prefer roosting in standing hollow trees.

To protect the swifts, the school stopped using its heating system during the weeks of roosting. Students and teachers wore sweaters and jackets, especially toward the end of September when classroom temperatures can drop to 50 to 60 °F (10 to 16 °C). Around 2003, the Audubon Society of Portland, school fundraisers and corporate sponsors donated \$60,000 to \$75,000 for an alternate school heating system which is independent of the brick chimney. The chimney is now maintained solely for the use of the birds.

They build their nests of saliva and small twigs. During the day they forage over woods, waters, and towns with high, buzzy twittering calls.

Though they may look superficially like swallows, there are many differences. Swifts have weak feet and cannot perch on tree branches or wires. They spend most of the day in speedy flight. They are dusky gray with paler throat and rump. The wings have the wrist joint very near the body, thus they have twinkling flight and brief soaring. Their tail feathers are short and bristle-like.

The swifts attract several predators, such as Peregrine Falcons and Cooper's Hawks, as well as hundreds to thousands of human spectators.

This swift was named in honor of American minerologist William Vaux (1811-1882). Since he pronounced his name as "vawks," that is the pronunciation of the name of the swift, not "voze" as it might be pronounced if French.



Vaux's Swifts at Chapman Elementary School in Portland, Oregon Photo credit: KatSam

[⇒ More ⇒](#)

# Unusual Birds for Backyard Habitats, continued

## Crow

**Species:** American—year round

It seems everyone knows the American Crow. Glossy coal-black plumage and an unforgettable call may seem simple, but do not underestimate the superior intelligence and sense of humor these birds possess. They eat just about anything—**worms, insects, small animals, seeds and fruit. Also eats garbage, carrion and chicks they steal from nests.**



This large bird has few admirers. Most folks find the crow's raucous call and abrupt behaviour very off-putting. Even gardeners who are luke warm about crows do not usually go out of their way to attract this relative of Poe's famous black bird, the Common Raven.

American Crows span the continent, from wilderness to farms to parks to cities, with the exception of Pacific temperate rain forests and tundras where brother Raven takes over.

This crow eats bugs, carrion, food scraps, seeds, eggs and nestlings, stranded fish and various grains. Active hunters prey on mice, frogs, and other small animals. In winter and autumn, they choose nuts and acorns. However, they rarely bother bird feeders. Farmers growing corn and other grains usually erect a scarecrow or two, hoping the crows will visit "nevermore."

Photo credit: JoJan



Photo credit: Mdf

[⇒ More ⇒](#)



# Unusual Birds for Backyard Habitats, continued

## Jay

**Species:** Western Scrub-Jay (*Aphelocoma californica*)

Native to western North America, Scrub-Jays love **shrubs mixed with sparsely branched trees**. They find great pleasure in announcing their presence with loud shrieks. Uncommonly smart and highly adaptable, they forage on the ground, in shrubs and trees. If you have a feeder they will be present. In fact, their aggressive nature toward other birds may make you wish you could keep them away! In spring and summer they eat more **insects and berries** than seeds. In the fall they come to steal **sunflower seeds and peanuts**, gulping down large quantities, then flying off to regurgitate and bury them in

a winter cache. They will also eat **fruit and vegetables** growing in backyards.



Western  
Scrub-Jay  
Photo by  
Nona

## Jay

**Species:** Steller's (*Cyanocitta stelleri*)

Steller's Jay, native to western North America, is distinctive in appearance with charcoal and blue plumage and crested head. Prefers **thick coniferous trees**. Diet is about two-thirds plant matter and one third animal matter gathered from both the ground and from trees.

**Seeds, nuts, berries, other fruit, invertebrates, eggs, small rodents, nestlings, small reptiles.** Feeders with **black-oil sunflower seeds, white striped sunflower seeds, cracked corn, raw peanuts and suet** in the winter season. Due to their size, they do

better at open-style or hopper feeders than tube-style feeders. Expect visits at **picnics and camp sites**.



Steller's Jay  
Photo by  
Nona



# Birds, Bugs and Bushes

## A cooperative approach to gardening in the Pacific northwest

The master plan for all things living on the earth is, in essence, the circle of life. Plants were attended by the elements for light and moisture, by the seasons to reach maturity and reproduce themselves.

Creatures on the wing assist the wind in pollination, carrying gifts among plants to fortify the species, and in distribution of seeds once they are ripe.

Crawling creatures move the grains of dirt, aerating the soil and further keeping of the global house in which we live.

Fruits and seeds sustain the winged ones, as do those who crawl when their tasks are complete.

An over-simplification is this synopsis of nature's handiwork, but there are truths to be found here nonetheless.

Our gardens are not required to shelter all the players in each microcosm. Few of us have the wherewithall anyway. But making choices in tune with the universe can realize a most pleasant symbiosis that echoes nature's master plan in its most pure form.



House Finch  
Photo by Nona



[⇒ More ⇒](#)



# Birds, Bugs and Bushes, continued

## Blackbirds

**Species:** Brewer's—year round  
Red-winged—year round

### Native plants:

Blueberries (*Vaccinium*)—fruit  
Blackberries (*Rubus*)—fruit  
Cattails (*Typha*)—nesting  
Rushes (*Junca*)—nesting  
Sedge (*Carex*)—nesting

Evergreen Huckleberry  
(*Vaccinium ovatum*)



The male Red-winged Blackbird is the “sentry of the marsh” during breeding season, lays claim to its territory to all and defends against would-be encroachers. Red-winged Blackbird is omnivorous, main diet includes seeds from weeds and waste grain such as corn and rice. A quarter of the diet is insects and other small animals such as **dragonflies, damselflies, butterflies, moths, and flies, snails, frogs, eggs, carrion, worms, spiders, mollusks**, especially during breeding season, foraging among plants and grabbing snacks in flight. In season, it eats **blueberries, blackberries, and other fruit**. Attract this bird with **bread, seed mixes, and suet**.

Red Winged Blackbird  
Photo by Nona

[⇒ More ⇒](#)

# Birds, Bugs and Bushes, continued

## Bluebirds

Species: Western  
Mountain

### Native plants:

Toyon (*Heteromeles arbutifolia*)—Fruit

Twinberry (*L. involucrata*)—Fruit

Nesting in cavities of trees, this is one of three bluebirds found only in North America, and has made a remarkable comeback due to restoration of habitat. Mountain Bluebirds are graceful in flight and very identifiable with its bright blue feathers. Both bluebirds readily use nest boxes, quite a treat for the lucky homeowner. Feed on **flying insects and berries**. **In winter they eat grasshoppers**. Platform feeders with **live meal worms, berries or peanuts**. Will greatly appreciate good nest boxes.

Western Bluebird  
Photo credit: Walter  
Siegmund



Mountain Bluebird  
Photo credit: Elaine  
R. Wilson



Twinberry  
(*Lonicera  
involucrata*)

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# Birds, Bugs and Bushes, continued

## Bunting

Species: Snow, Lazuli

### Native plants:

Douglas' Sagewort (*Artemisia douglasiana*)—Nesting

Snow Bunting is a large finch that breeds in far northern climes, even arctic tundra. In winter, many of them come south as far as Oregon. Sometimes they feed in agricultural fields, rising in a huge white cloud when startled. Lazulis are beautifully blue, vivacious and so sweet. Both males and females twitch their tails to one side when excited. They may be seen throughout Oregon, favoring Rogue, Umpqua and Willamette River Valleys where

they find plentiful seeds, berries, **grasshoppers, caterpillars, and beetles, plus a goodly number of true bugs, bees and ants.**

Douglas' Sagewort  
(*Artemisia douglasiana*)  
Photo credit: Stonebird

Snow Bunting  
Photo credit: Stonebird

[⇒ More ⇒](#)

Lazuli Bunting and  
Black Headed Grosbeak  
Photo by Nona



# Birds, Bugs and Bushes, continued

**Bushtit**—year round

**Native plants:**

Alder (*Alnus rhombifolia*)—Flowers

Big-leaf maple (*Acer macrophyllum*)—Bark/foliage (insects)

Blueblossom (*Ceanothus* spp)—Seeds

Coyote brush (*Baccharis pilularis*)—Bark/foliage (insects)

Flowering Sage (*Salvia* spp)—Seeds

Tiny gray birds, very friendly and gregarious except when nesting—family comes first! They find no problems building nests in neighborhoods, treating humans with aplomb. Fond of suet cakes and never fail to take a quick bath when offered. Favored foods are **insects and spiders** they pick from shrubs and herbs, sometimes hanging upside down to get a bite.



Bushtit  
Photo credit: WalterSiegmund



Bushtit nest of moss and lichen assembled with spider silk and lined with feathers hanging from a branch.

[⇒ More ⇒](#)



# Birds, Bugs and Bushes, continued

## Chickadee

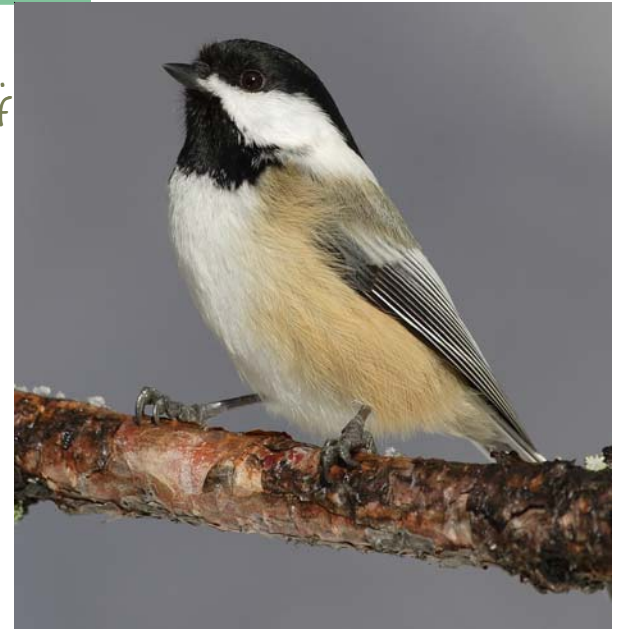
**Species:** Black-capped—year round  
Chestnut-backed—year round

### Native plants:

Pines (*Pinus* spp)—Bark/foliage (insects)  
Redwood (*Sequoia sempervirens*)—Bark/foliage (insects)  
Twinberry (*L. involucrata*)—Fruit

Friendly and cheerful, Chickadees never allow a winter snow to dampen their spirits. Feeders of **suet and sunflower seeds** are well received, especially near conifers. Whether or not feeders are provided, these sweet little birds glean much of their protein from crawling things found under leaves, especially **insect eggs and larvae, small caterpillars, spruce budworms and cankerworms**. Curious with little or no fear of humans, and famous for willingly, after a little “training,” they will take **seeds and nuts** from the hand. In fall after their offspring are independent, they throw noisy little parties with titmice, nuthatches, woodpeckers, and other species.

Blackcappedchickadee.  
Photo credit: mdf



Black-Capped Chickadee  
eating seed Photo  
credit: Talshiarr



⇒ More ⇒



Redwood foliage  
(*Sequoia sempervirens*)

Chestnut-backed  
Chickadee painting by  
Louis Agassiz  
Fuentes



# Birds, Bugs and Bushes, continued

## Creeper

Species: Brown

### Native plants:

Pines (*Pinus* spp)—Bark/foliage (insects)

Redwood (*Sequoia sempervirens*)—Bark/foliage (insects)

Said to be the only North American bird that relies on both the trunk and bark of trees for nesting and foraging. These small one-stop shoppers have the perfect bill to discover hidden insects in the bark of conifers or oaks.



The Cornell Lab of Ornithology's All About Birds website offers this description:

"Brown Creepers are tiny woodland birds with an affinity for the biggest trees they can find. Look for these little, long-tailed scraps of brown and white spiraling up stout trunks and main branches, sometimes passing downward-facing nuthatches along the way."



Diet includes (but is not limited to) **insects, larvae, stinkbugs, fruit flies, gnats, beetles, weevils, bark beetle parasitoids, butterflies, moths, lacewings, caddisflies, scale insects, leafhoppers, katydids, flat-bugs, plant lice, ants, and sawflies** along with **spiders, spider eggs, and pseudoscorpions**. They may also eat small amounts of seeds and other plant materials. Creepers may visit seed and suet feeders.

Back view. Photo credit: Badjoby



[⇒ More ⇒](#)



# Birds, Bugs and Bushes, continued

## Finch

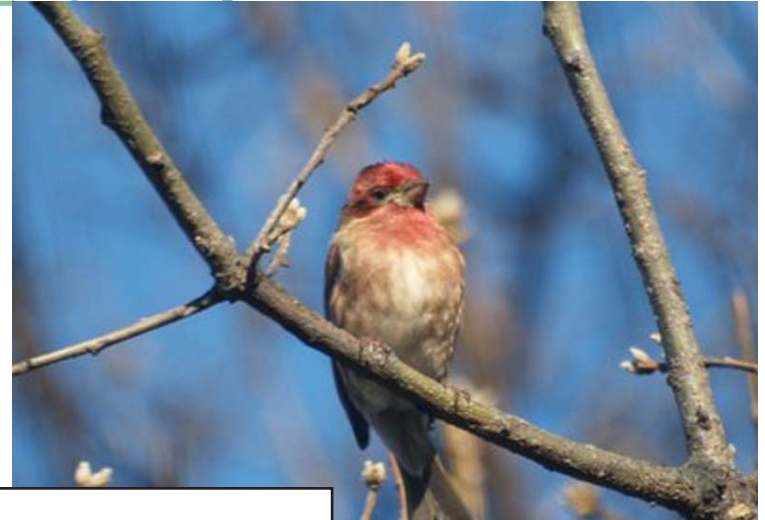
**Species:** House—year round  
Purple—year round in forested

### Native plants:

Alder (*Alnus rhombifolia*)—Seeds  
Big-leaf maple (*Acer macrophyllum*)—Seeds/flowers  
Black walnut (*Juglans hindsii*)—Nuts  
Blueblossom (*Ceanothus* spp)—Seeds  
Dogwood (*Cornus*)—Fruit  
Oregon grape (*Mahonia* spp)—Fruit  
Pink-flower currant (*Ribes sanguineum*)—Fruit  
Red elderberry (*Sambucus racemosa*)—Fruit  
Strawberries (*Fragaria chiloensis*)—Fruit  
Thistle (*Cirsium* spp)—Seeds  
Wax myrtle (*Myrica californica*)—Fruit  
Western redbud (*Cercis occidentalis*)—Seed  
Wild rose (*Rosa*)—Fruit  
Willow (*Salix* spp)—Unripe fruit



Red-Flowering  
Currant (*Ribes  
sanguineum*)



Finch Photos by Nona



House Finches are cheerful and gregarious, flocks can number over 50 birds. Purple Finch's song is softer, bubbly and sweet. They forage in trees, bushes, ground vegetation for **seeds, berries, insects**. They are fond of sunflower seeds, millet, and thistle.

[⇒ More ⇒](#)

# Birds, Bugs and Bushes, continued



## Flicker

**Species:** Northern—year round

### Native plants:

Dogwood (*Cornus*)—Fruit

Lemonadeberry (*Rhus integrifolia*)—Fruit

Madrone (*Arbutus menziesii*)—Fruit

Red elderberry (*Sambucus racemosa*)—Fruit

Wax myrtle (*Myrica californica*)—Fruit

From the Audubon guide, "flickers are the only woodpeckers that frequently feed on the ground." Intelligent and active, these birds probe with their beak and catch insects in flight. They poke their beaks underground looking for ants and larvae in movements like other woodpeckers use on wood. Their long tongues can reach out 2 inches longer than their beak. Besides eating ants (which make up 45% of their diet), flickers have a behavior called anting, during which they use the acid from the ants to assist in preening, as it is useful in keeping them free of parasites. Diet includes **fruits, berries, seeds, nuts, including poison oak, ivy, dogwood, sumac, wild cherry and grape, bayberries, hackberries, elderberries, sunflower and thistle seeds, but primarily insects including flies, butterflies, moths, beetles, and snails.**



Attribution: Natures Pics ([www.naturespicsonline.com](http://www.naturespicsonline.com))

Pacific Dogwood (*Cornus nuttallii*)

[⇒ More ⇒](#)



# Birds, Bugs and Bushes, continued

## Goldfinch

**Species:** American— spring/summer/ fall/winter (rare)  
Lesser—year round

### Native plants:

Native thistles  
Milkweed (shown below)

American Goldfinch's musical calls and bright yellow and black plumage are easy identifiers for even fledgeling birders. Lesser Goldfinch, once called Green-backed Goldfinch, is a regular visitor to the Willamette Valley. Goldfinches are among the strictest vegetarians in the bird world, selecting an entirely vegetable diet and only inadvertently swallowing an occasional insect. Favored are seeds from composite plants such as **sunflowers, thistle, asters, grasses, and trees-- alder, birch, western red cedar, and elm**. Feeder favs are nyjer and sunflower.

American Goldfinch  
Photo by Nona



[⇒ More ⇒](#)

# Birds, Bugs and Bushes, continued

## Grosbeak

**Species:** Black-headed—spring/summer  
Evening—spring, irregular from year to year

### Native plants:

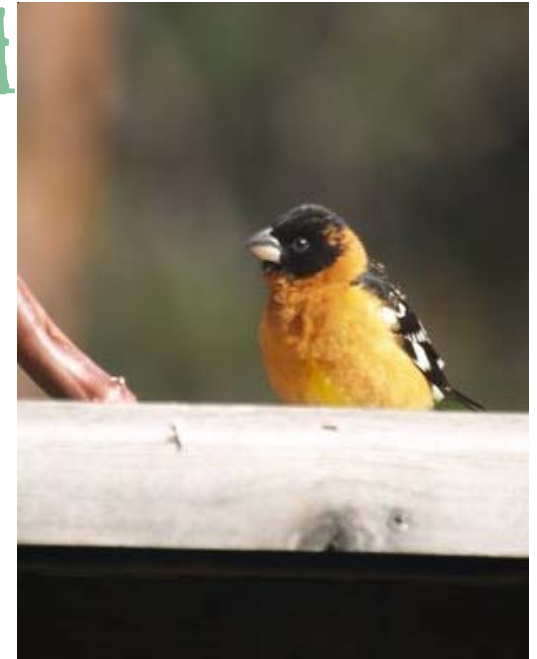
Big-leaf maple (*Acer macrophyllum*)—Seeds/flowers  
Black walnut (*Juglans hindsii*)—Nuts  
Catalina cherry (*Prunus ilicifolia*)—Fruit  
Dogwood (*Cornus*)—Fruit  
Madrone (*Arbutus menziesii*)—Flowers/fruit  
Native blackberry (*Rubus ursinus*)—Fruit  
Nootka rose (*Rosa nutkana*)  
Snowberries (*Symphoricarpos* spp)—Fruit  
Toyon (*Heteromeles arbutifolia*)—Fruit

A substantially formed bird with large head, short tail and big conical bill, these birds summer in the mountains, breed and often move to lowlands in winter. Ideal habitat includes some large trees and a diverse understory. They snatch and crush **hard-bodied insects or snails**. Insects (especially beetles), **spiders**, and other animals make about 60% of breeding-season food. **Fruits and seeds** make up most of the rest. **Berries** are favored during migration. **Wild juneberries, poison oak, elderberries, oats, wheat, weed seeds like dock, pigweed, chickweed, and bur clover.**

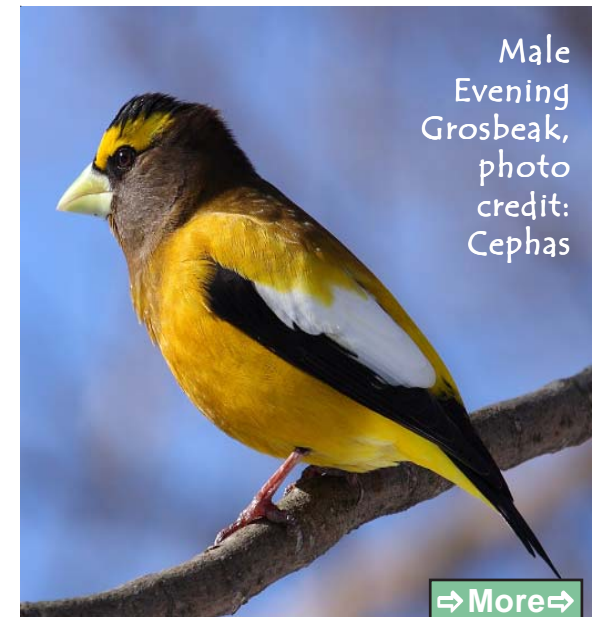


Also feed on cultivated fruit like **figs, mulberries, cherries, apricots, plums, blackberries, and crabapples**. In spring and summer, feeders with **sunflower seed and nectar** feeders for orioles are attractive. Where their range overlaps with wintering **monarch butterflies**, grosbeaks eat large numbers of these insects--they don't seem to suffer from toxins in monarchs' bodies, which render them inedible to most birds.

Black Headed  
Grossbeak  
Photo by  
Nona



Male  
Evening  
Grosbeak,  
photo  
credit:  
Cephas



⇒ More ⇒



# Birds, Bugs and Bushes, continued

## Junco

**Species:** Dark-eyed— fall/winter/spring/ summer (rare)

**Native plants:**

Nootka rose (*Rosa nutkana*)

Pines (*Pinus* spp)—Bark/foliage (insects)

Redwood (*Sequoia sempervirens*)—Bark/foliage (insects)



Voted most common diners at feeders in the Pacific Northwest--over 96% of feeders reporting over 8 birds per feeder, and one of the top 10 feeder birds throughout the United States. They may prefer to feed on the ground under feeders and tray feeder, lower to the ground supplied with black oil sunflower seeds be a magnet for them.

Small, dense conifers, evergreen broadleafs (**rhododendrons, camellias, azaleas**) offer cover. Some juncos may remain over summer and breed in yards or

parks, but many migrate to breed in damp conifer forests with brushy undergrowth. Nest will be in **grasses, ferns, or bushes**.

These birds celebrate life with song and dance (and flight) and are a true joy to watch. Their antics seem to invite more reserved species to join the fun.



Female, photo credit: Cephas

[⇒ More ⇒](#)

# Birds, Bugs and Bushes, continued

## Kinglet

**Species:** Ruby-crowned— fall/winter/spring

### **Native plants:**

Alder (*Alnus rhombifolia*)—Flowers

Big-leaf maple (*Acer macrophyllum*)—Bark/foliage (insects)

Itsy bitsy bird seems to never be still. It constantly flicks its wings and hops from twig to twig. Its drab appearance belies the amazingly melodic song--so sweet, most enchanting. In early spring it begins the move to mountains high for breeding, the males displaying the vibrant red crown. There in the forests of **Douglas-fir, Larch, Grand Fir, and Engelmann Spruce** at least 5000 feet high, the cup-shaped nest holds up to 12 eggs, said to be the largest clutch of all birds of this size. Returning to our lowland gardens in September once again to eat **as many insects it can find** in the bark and branches of conifers and other greenery, even brambles!

Male,  
rear  
view.  
Photo  
credit:  
Dobak



Male,  
front  
view.  
Photo  
credit:  
Dan  
Pancemo



[⇒ More ⇒](#)



# Birds, Bugs and Bushes, continued

## Nuthatch

**Species:** Red-breasted— year round, conifers  
White-breasted— year round, oaks

## Native plants:

Buckeye (*Aesculus californica*)—Bark/foliage (insects)  
Pines (*Pinus* spp)—Bark/foliage (insects)  
Red elderberry (*Sambucus racemosa*)—Fruit

Red Elderberry, Photo  
credit: Walter Siegmund



Very upbeat and seem to be always looking for dinner., White-breasted Nuthatches are actors with large repertoire of dances, courtships, territorial interactions and displays to distract predators. On an insect hunt, they probe tree bark, poking inside any crevice, single-mindedly performing unusual acrobatics to get their prey. Summer diet is insects and other arthropods such as **beetles, caterpillars, spiders, ants, and earwigs**, and they raise their nestlings on these foods. Later in the year they dine on conifer seeds and other items they stowed away earlier. During outbreaks of **spruce budworm**, they jump on the bandwagon to eradicate them. Cornell Ornithology notes: "When given the choice they tend to select the heaviest food item available; if these are too large to eat in one piece they typically jam them into bark and then hammer them open." At feeders. **peanuts, sunflower seeds and suet** are the go-to hites



Red-breasted Nuthatch  
Photo credit: Snowmanradio



Red Elderberry Photo  
credit: Frank Vincentz



White-breasted Nuthatch  
Photo credit: MDF

[⇒ More ⇒](#)

# Birds, Bugs and Bushes, continued

## Orioles

### Native plants:

Dogwood (Cornus)—Fruit

Prefers open spaced cottonwoods, maples and other tall broadleaf trees for building its nests of plant fibers, hairs, fine grass and moss which it usually situates near the end of a branch, fastening them to twigs at the sides and top. Mainly a bug eater, forages in trees and shrubs, also making short flights to catch insects. Berries and nectar are other must-haves.

Typical breeding habitat is forested streamside, primarily **hardwood trees, large cottonwoods, willows, and oaks**. Also utilized are wetlands, farms, orchards and suburban areas where much irrigation occurs. During migration, Bullock's Orioles can be found in a wide variety of open woodlands, including urban parks. Their winter habitat requirements are not well known, but appear similar to that of breeding season.



Diet consists of **small invertebrates (including many caterpillars), ripe fruit (especially cherries), and some nectar**. Feeders of suet, oranges, grape jelly or nectar in specialized oriole feeders. Plant **native fruit-bearing bushes, cottonwood and willows** to make Bullock's Orioles feel right at home.

Blackfruit Dogwood



Bullocks Oriole  
Photo by Nona

[⇒ More ⇒](#)



# Birds, Bugs and Bushes, continued

## Pewee

**Species:** Western Wood— summer/fall

### Native plants:

Red Elderberry (*Sambucus racemosa* var. *arborescens*)—Fruit

Blue Elderberry (*Sambucus mexicana*)--Fruit

Widespread throughout the West, this tyrant flycatcher's method for obtaining food is very efficient. It sits like a little statue atop an open twig, watching steadfastly for food to fly by. When an unsuspecting insect enters its field of play, it sails out, bill clicking, nabs the target and returns to its perch to savour the catch and await more dinner.

Pewee comes to the Pacific Northwest around the middle of May when larger flying insects are out. They stay with us into late September, then they head for the milder

climes in Columbia, Venezuela, and other hospitable spaces in South America.

Breeding locations are generally mature trees, preferably deciduous, often in residential areas. The nest is a shallow open cup made from plant fibers and bound with spider silk to a horizontal branch. The female incubates the eggs.

Its particular favorites are **flies and wasps with ants, bees, beetles, moths and other bugs. It sometimes eats elderberries and grass seeds.**

Western Wood Pewee

Photo credit: Jerry Friedman



Elderberries (top to bottom): Red fruit, blue fruit, blue shrub



# Birds, Bugs and Bushes, continued

## Quail

**Species:** California—year round, local in brushy country settings

### Native plants:

Blueblossom (*Ceanothus* spp)—Seeds/nesting  
Coffeeberry (*Rhamnus californica*)—Fruit  
Gooseberry (*Ribes speciosum*)—Fruit  
Lemonadeberry (*Rhus integrifolia*)—Fruit  
Manzanita (*Arctostaphylos* spp)—Nesting  
Pink-flower currant (*Ribes sanguineum*)—Fruit  
Red elderberry (*Sambucus racemosa*)—Fruit  
Toyon (*Heteromeles arbutifolia*)—Fruit  
Wild ginger (*Asarum caudatum*)—Nesting  
Wild rose (*Rosa*)—Shelter

Photo by Nona



The California quail eats seeds, plant parts like buds and sometimes insects. They feed in flocks in the early morning. Their flexibility allows an ever-changing menu as the seasons pass. When there are lots of **acorns**, the quail gobble them up, especially gleaning fresh nutmeats from the road where the shells have been crushed by cars. Seed pods of legumes, such as **Lupines**, are a favorite. In winter, seeds are usually plentiful. Come spring, the seeds remaining on the ground begin to sprout leafy greens. Plants they enjoy include: **Quercus, Rubus, Ribes, Ceanothus, Rhus, Sambucus, Lonicera, Artemisia, Fragaria, and Salvia**. Ground covers and perennials in groupings between safe zones give safe passage between areas. I have a friend who planted **forget-me-nots** in this fashion with excellent results. Urban and suburban areas do not see many quail because food is often scarce in these areas and cats are always on the prowl.

[⇒ More ⇒](#)



# Birds, Bugs and Bushes, continued

## Robin

**Species:** American—year round

### Native plants:

- Dogwood (*Cornus*)—Fruit
- Huckleberry (*Vaccinium*)—Fruit
- Madrone (*Arbutus menziesii*)—Fruit
- Manzanita (*Arctostaphylos* spp)—Fruit
- Oregon grape (*Mahonia* spp)—Fruit
- Pink-flower currant (*Ribes sanguineum*)—Fruit
- Red elderberry (*Sambucus racemosa*)—Fruit
- Snowberries (*Symphoricarpos* spp)—Fruit
- Thimbleberry (*Rubus parviflorus*)—Fruit
- Twinberry (*L. involucrata*)—Fruit
- Wax myrtle (*Myrica californica*)—Fruit



Pink-flower  
currant (*Ribes  
sanguineum*)

Adult male, photo  
credit: MDF



They're  
here!  
Photo  
credit:  
Daniel  
Marquard

In mid March comes the song of the American Robin, the first bird most children recognize and call their own. Here in the Pacific Northwest, Robin red breast stays with us all year but the image of red-red-robin pulling a worm out of the earth is the iconic herald for springtime.

Robins love fruit--**Oregon Grape, huckleberries, serviceberries, strawberries, and hawthorn.** Proteins from invertebrates such as beetle grubs, earthworms, and caterpillars. These water-wise birds like their morning bath and return to water again and again for a refreshing sip. Greeting the sun at dawning, the Robin's song persists off and on throughout the day, often singing from sunrise to sunset.

Look for distinctive blue eggs in nests made mostly of grasses placed securely where the branches meet the trunk of a tree, in upper sections of large shrubs, and sometimes a corner of a porch or carport. They may raise three batches in a single year.

[⇒ More ⇒](#)

# Birds, Bugs and Bushes, continued

## Siskin

**Species:** Pine— winter/spring/ irregular from year to year in conifers

### Native plants:

Alder (*Alnus rhombifolia*)—Seeds

Big-leaf maple (*Acer macrophyllum*)—Seeds/flowers

Western sycamore (*Platanus racemosa*)—Fruit

Wild rose (*Rosa*)—Fruit

The resemblance of Pine Siskin to female House Finches can be misleading to even well-informed birders, but the Siskin is smaller. On closer look the difference is broader than first assumed. Their song is maybe a better identifier than appearance.



Red Alder (*Alnus rhombifolia*) Photo credit: Zoya Akulova

In the Pacific Northwest, Siskins nest in high canopies of conifer forests throughout the area where their coloring renders them almost invisible. In winter, they move down to lower elevations where the weather is more hospitable and food sources, especially their favorite **Alder 'cone' fruit**. Though this very nomadic bird is largely unpredictable, if you offer a **thistle feeder filled with Niger seeds** it is likely they will come a-calling.

Photo credit: Cephas



White Alder (*Alnus rhombifolia*)  
Below, 'cone' photo credit: Zoya Akulova



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# Birds, Bugs and Bushes, continued

## Sparrow

**Species:** Fox— fall/winter/spring  
Golden-crowned— fall/winter/spring  
House— year round  
Song— year round  
White-crowned— year round (rare)

## Native plants:

Alder (*Alnus rhombifolia*)—Seeds  
Coyote brush (*Baccharis pilularis*)—Seeds/  
nesting  
Dogwood (*Cornus*)—Fruit  
Flowering Sage (*Salvia* spp)—Flowers  
Madrone (*Arbutus menziesii*)—  
Fruit  
Strawberries (*Fragaria  
chiloensis*)—Fruit  
Willow (*Salix* spp)—Unripe fruit



White Crowed Sparrow  
Photo by Nona



Fox Sparrow is a big bird with brown and grayish feathers. They are no stranger to feeders and will scratch along towhees for fallen seeds. Golden-crowned Sparrows are common in western Oregon. In spring, their head markings are beautiful golden, black and white. Listen for their song coming from brush piles. The inconspicuous Song Sparrow is quite vocal with a variety of songs any time of year. When approached, it announces its presence and very often will jump to a conspicuous perch to greet visitors.

White-crowned Sparrows pick their food from the ground where they dash out for a bite, back to cover to munch and then darting out again. They eat black oil sunflowers and other seeds at your backyard feeder. This may allow you to examine them more closely, perhaps noticing differences related to age or population.

⇒ More ⇒

# Birds, Bugs and Bushes, continued

## Swallow

**Species:** Barn— spring/summer/fall  
Cliff— spring/summer/large barns and overpasses  
Violet-green— spring/summer/fall

## Native plants:

Alder (*Alnus rhombifolia*)—Seeds

Barn Swallows have become so common they are sometimes mistaken for pets. Nesting choices are barns and outbuildings as well as beneath bridges. Violet-Green Swallows softly sings its joy in the early morn as it darts through the air in search of food in the form of emerging insects including **mosquitos, butterflies, mayflies and moths**. The Cliff Swallow builds its unique gourd-shaped mud nest to last and, naturally, other species such as Rosy Finches take them over when the opportunity arises.

Violet-green Swallows are very common throughout most of the Pacific NW. They occur from sea level to the tops of the mountains.



They are equally at home flying over forests or towns chasing insects high in the air and uttering pleasant twittering notes. They nest in crevices in cliffs, tree cavities, nest boxes, and holes in buildings. In the fall, Violet-green Swallows migrate south in large flocks. Some times these flocks can number in the thousands. You may then notice them shoulder-to-shoulder on telephone wires, often near water. the only swallow limited to western North America. In the Pacific NW they arrive in February and March and remain through September or early October. They winter from southern California and Arizona south to Middle America.

Red Alder seeds

Photo credit: Walter Siegmund



Male Violet Green Swallow

Photo credit: Alan Vernon

[⇒ More ⇒](#)



# Birds, Bugs and Bushes, continued

## Tanager

**Species:** Western— spring/summer

### Native plants:

White Fir (*Abies concolor*)  
Sugar Pine (*Pinus lambertiana*)  
Douglas-Fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*)  
California Black Oak (*Quercus kelloggii*)  
Quaking Aspen (*Populus tremuloides*)  
Balsam Poplar (*Populus balsamifera*)

California Black Oak  
(*Quercus kelloggii*)



Western Tanager female,  
photo credit: Jerry  
Friedman

Bird watching is a most rewarding activity (or obsession!). Observing these natural phenoms is great fun, always surprising and very calming. Unlike watching fish in an aquarium, birds are free to go wherever they take a notion.

The show never goes stale--even though a good number of birds hang out in the neighborhood all year, many follow their inherent migratory patterns as the seasons go by. Here in Oregon's Willamette Valley, the month of May has us watching and waiting for the beginning of Western Tanager's migration.

Slightly smaller than American Robins, tanager males are exotic yellow and red and black. The females are relegated to muted colors, of course. With feathers the colors of the tropics, these birds arrive singing and dancing in backyard trees and shrubs, kicking any leftover blahs to the curb. Get out your cameras, it's going to be a wild ride!



Western Tanager male,  
photo credit: <http://www.naturaspicsonline.com>

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# Birds, Bugs and Bushes, continued

## Thrush

**Species:** Varied—winter, especially during snow storms

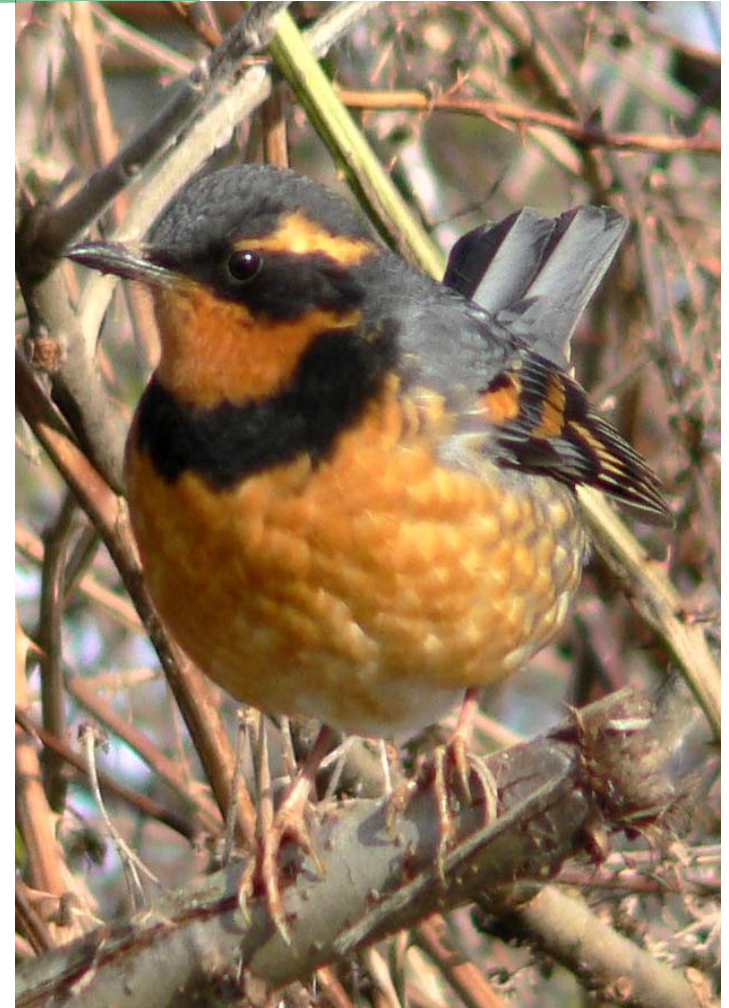
**Native plants:**

Gooseberry (*Ribes speciosum*)—Fruit  
Huckleberry (*Vaccinium*)—Fruit  
Laurel sumac (*Rhus laurina*)—Fruit  
Lemonadeberry (*Rhus integrifolia*)—Fruit  
Madrone (*Arbutus menziesii*)—Fruit  
Nootka rose (*Rosa nutkana*)  
Pink-flower currant (*Ribes sanguineum*)—Fruit  
Red elderberry (*Sambucus racemosa*)—Fruit  
Snowberries (*Symphoricarpos* spp)—Fruit  
Twinberry (*L. involucrata*)—Fruit  
Wild grape (*Vitis californica*)—Fruit  
Willow (*Salix* spp)—Unripe fruit

A rather shy bird, something like a robin but has a distinct black band on its breast, orange eyebrows and orange wingbands. Its unique song is intriguing, a delight.

Foraging by picking up dead leaves in its bill, it jumps backward to clear the ground and then looks for **bugs**, its favored food during breeding season. **Nuts and berries** are winter diet.

Snowberry (*Symphoricarpos* spp)



Male Varied Thrush, photo credit: Walter Siegmund

[⇒ More ⇒](#)



# Birds, Bugs and Bushes, continued

## Towhee

Species: Spotted—year round

### Native plants:

Black walnut (*Juglans hindsii*)—Nuts  
Catalina cherry (*Prunus ilicifolia*)—Fruit/nesting  
Gooseberry (*Ribes speciosum*)—Fruit  
Oregon grape (*Mahonia* spp)—Fruit  
Pink-flower currant (*Ribes sanguineum*)—Fruit  
Red elderberry (*Sambucus racemosa*)—Fruit  
Snowberries (*Symphoricarpos* spp)—Fruit  
Strawberries (*Fragaria chiloensis*)—Fruit  
Toyon (*Heteromeles arbutifolia*)—Fruit  
Twinberry (*L. involucrata*)—Fruit

Oregon Grape fruit



Well known in most areas of Oregon, this bird prefers brushy areas west of the Cascades for breeding.

They forage on the ground or in low vegetation, with a habit of noisily rummaging through dry leaves searching for food. They mainly eat **insects, acorns, seeds and berries**.

Common visitor to bird feeders wherever seed is scattered on the ground but always near cover should that protection be needed.

Towhees visit us regularly--I sprinkle various seeds on the deck and we love watching their antics through large picture windows.

Photo credit: Walter Siegmund



[⇒ More ⇒](#)

# Birds, Bugs and Bushes, continued

## Vireo

Photo by Minette Layne

Species: Hutton's

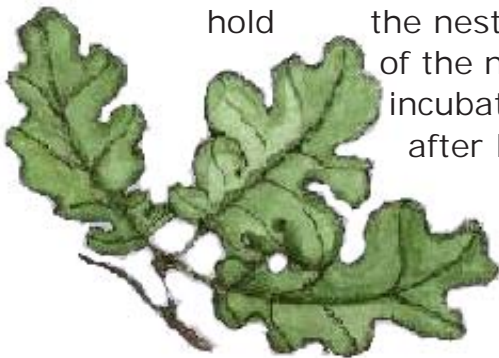
### Native plants:

- Alder (*Alnus rhombifolia*)—Bark/foliage (insects)
- Big-leaf maple (*Acer macrophyllum*)—Bark/foliage (insects)
- Dogwood (*Cornus*)—Fruit
- Red elderberry (*Sambucus racemosa*)—Fruit
- Snowberries (*Symphoricarpos* spp)—Fruit

Quiet and modest, charming and as cute as a bug in a rug, this unobtrusive little bird is not commonly seen due to its shady choices of shelter and camouflage coloured feathers.

They eat mostly **insects and spiders**. They will also eat **small fruits, berries, and plant galls**. Frequents oaks and mixed woodlands, foraging for bugs among the foliage. Often joins chickadees, kinglets and nuthatches for winter bug-hunting.

Nesting is a family affair. The monogamous parents build the nest together using strips of bark, moss and lichens and lining it with fine grass they have harvested. Very often they use spiderwebs to hold the nest together and even decorate the outside of the nest with spider egg cases. Both parents incubate the eggs and both care for the young after hatch.



Big-Leaf Maple (*Acer macrophyllum*) bark. Photo credit: Walter Siegmund



[⇒ More ⇒](#)



# Birds, Bugs and Bushes, continued

## Warbler

**Species:** Orange-crowned—spring  
Townsend's—winter/spring, conifers  
Wilson's— spring  
Yellow-rumped— fall/winter/spring

## Native plants:

Alder (*Alnus rhombifolia*)—Flowers/seeds  
Bay (*Umbellularia californica*)—Seeds  
Big-leaf maple (*Acer macrophyllum*)—Bark/foliage (insects)  
Willow (*Salix* spp)—Unripe fruit

Orange-crowned Warblers are one of the earliest and most abundant migrants in Oregon. They glean insects from the undersides of leaves and are often seen probing into dead leaf clusters and flower heads. Perhaps this is why they are able to winter farther north than most other warblers. When naturalist Thomas Say came to name this sweet thing, he looked the bird over well and found that the base of feathers on the male's crown are orange. He selected the scientific species name "celata," which means "concealed," in reference to this orange crown.

The Yellow-rumped Warbler may be the most familiar warbler in Oregon. It is not so selctive regardine habitat--look for them in backyard trees to willows to sagebrush to deep conifers.

Townsend's warbler is more picky and their stay in the northwest area shorter than other warblers. They are also not as talkative when foraging. If you are quiet when walking through conifer forests, you may come upon a flock of these gorgeous birds enjoying a dinner of freshly captured **insects**.

If it's colorful feathers you're seeking, take a gander at male Wilson's Warblers among the woods and tall shrubs of the Coast Range or anywhere in the Willamette Valley.



Orange-Crowned Photo: Dave Menke



Townsend's Photo: Slodocent



Wilson's Photo: Michael Woodruff



Yellow-Rumped by Pterzian

[⇒ More ⇒](#)

# Birds, Bugs and Bushes, continued

## Waxwing

**Species:** Cedar— spring/summer/fall

### Native plants:

Alder (*Alnus rhombifolia*)—Flowers  
Catalina cherry (*Prunus ilicifolia*)—Fruit  
Coffeeberry (*Rhamnus californica*)—Fruit  
Madrone (*Arbutus menziesii*)—Fruit  
Manzanita (*Arctostaphylos* spp)—Fruit  
Red elderberry (*Sambucus racemosa*)—Fruit  
Snowberries (*Symphoricarpus* spp)—Fruit  
Thimbleberry (*Rubus parviflorus*)—Fruit  
Toyon (*Heteromeles arbutifolia*)—Fruit  
Western sycamore (*Platanus racemosa*)—Fruit  
Wild grape (*Vitis californica*)—Fruit

Cedar Waxwing  
Courtship  
Photo credit:  
Minette Layne



Sleek and social, arriving en masse in May, they scope out the berry situation and wait to nest until **berries** (their primary food) are plentiful. Except while nesting, they flock together filling their bellies with **fruit** and singing their songs. Toward the end of summer, they often turn to **insect** edibles which they catch out over rivers.

[⇒ More ⇒](#)



Madrone berries  
Photo: Bri Weldon

Thimbleberries  
Photo: Walter Siegmund



Wild Grape

Coffeeberry  
Photo: Brofri



Manzanita  
Photo: Stan Shebs



# Birds, Bugs and Bushes, continued

## Woodpecker

**Species:** Downy—year round

**Native plants:**

Buckeye (*Aesculus californica*)—Bark/foliage (insects)

Dogwood (*Cornus*)—Fruit

Oak (*Quercus* spp)—Acorns

Red elderberry (*Sambucus racemosa*)—Fruit

Smallest of North American woodpeckers, and also most often seen. Likes to nest in decayed wood or healthy wood where appropriate growth forms a suitable space. Enjoys deciduous and mixed forests for regular living space.

If you have a suet feeder, Downy Woodpeckers (the smallest North American woodpecker) will come. In nature's world, the favored bites are **insects**

harvested from the branches and some from the main trunk of most any tree. Here in the Pacific Northwest, Downy Woodpeckers seem to be well pleased wherever they are. Streams lined with willows, oak groves, orchards, conifer woodlands, deciduous trees and shrubs, in backyards and town parks and farmsteads. When winter comes, they very often combine forces with chickadees, kinglets, nuthatches and other species for foraging expeditions.

There is another woodpecker that is similar to Downy but runs a little smaller. That is the Hairy Woodpecker. Though the markings are akin, their bills are different. Hairy's bills are stout and strong, Downy's are more delicate.

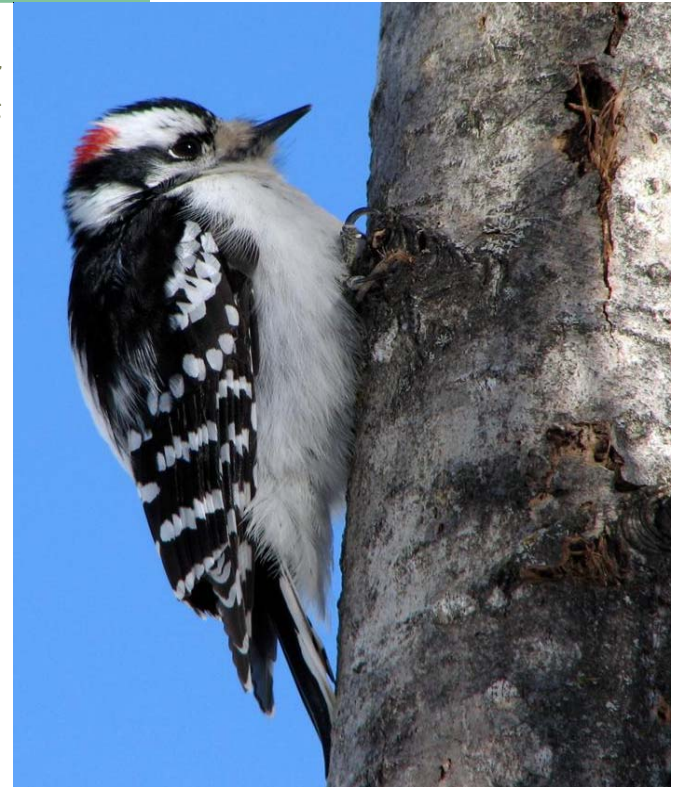
Garry Oak (*Quercus garryana*)

Photo credit: Walter Siegmund



Downy Woodpecker

Photo credit: Peter deWit



[⇒ More ⇒](#)

# Birds, Bugs and Bushes, continued

## Wren

**Species:** Bewick's—year round

### Native plants:

Flowering Sage (*Salvia* spp)—Seeds

Manzanita (*Arctostaphylos* spp)—Nesting

Red elderberry (*Sambucus racemosa*)—Fruit

Snowberries (*Symphoricarpos* spp)—Fruit

Thimbleberry (*Rubus parviflorus*)—Fruit

Twinberry (*L. involucrata*)—Fruit

Though its song is frequently mistaken for the Song Sparrow, there is no

disguising its long tail, thin bill and white line above its eye.

Usual diet includes the **eggs, larvae, pupae, and adults of insects**

and other small invertebrates such as **bugs, beetles, bees and wasps, caterpillars, butterflies, moths, grasshoppers, crickets, flies, and spiders**. On occasion, these birds find **seeds, fruit, and other plant matter** tasty, especially in winter. Often the adults eat pebbles and mud which aids in digestion of food.

Thimbleberry

Photo credit: T. Abe Lloyd

Photo credit:  
Minette Layne





# Birds, Bugs and Bushes, continued

## Killdeer

### Native plants:

- Huckleberries (*Vaccinium*)--Fruit
- Red elderberry (*Sambucus racemosa*)—Fruit
- Snowberries (*Symphoricarpos* spp)—Fruit
- Thimbleberry (*Rubus parviflorus*)—Fruit
- Twinberry (*L. involucrata*)—Fruit

### Audubon's description of this bird:

Suppose yourself wandering over some extensive prairie. Your footsteps, ever so light, strike the ear of the watchful Killdeer, who, with a velocity scarcely surpassed by that of any



Red Huckleberry  
(*Vaccinium parvifolium*)



other, comes up, passing and repassing swiftly around you. His clear notes indicate his alarm: why are you there? How glad he would be to see you depart from his beloved hunting-grounds.

Chicks are patterned almost identically to adults, and are able to move around immediately after hatching. The Killdeer frequently uses a "broken wing act" to distract predators from the nest.

Diet is primarily invertebrates--**earthworms, snails, crayfish, grasshoppers, beetles, and aquatic insect larvae**. Many a farmer plowing the land is closely followed by Killdeer hoping to retrieve unearthed worms or insect larvae or seeds left behind. Berries are enjoyed as well.

Killdeer  
Photo by Nona

⇒ More ⇒

# Birds, Bugs and Bushes, continued

## References:

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The Bird Guide by Greg Gillson, [www.thebirdguide.com](http://www.thebirdguide.com)

Project Feederwatch by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, [www.birds.cornell.edu/pfw](http://www.birds.cornell.edu/pfw). "Embrace the winter. Count feeder birds for science!"

All About Birds, another offering from Cornell's Lab of Ornithology, [www.allaboutbirds.org/buildingskills-sizeandshape](http://www.allaboutbirds.org/buildingskills-sizeandshape), focuses on bird identification.

National Geographic's Backyard Bird Identifier, [www.animals.nationalgeographic.com/animals/birding/backyard-bird-identifier/](http://www.animals.nationalgeographic.com/animals/birding/backyard-bird-identifier/), is an easy to use online tool for determining the bird species.



## Wild roses and snow berries

One of my very favorite native plant combinations planted together as a hedge or grouping provide casual beauty and wildlife habitat elements of food and a safe zone for tiny birds.

This photo of just such a planting created and maintained entirely by nature was taken in Oregon's Willamette Valley in autumn. These hardy plants take care of themselves once firmly established. The thicket form does not necessitate trimming but can be cut back to shorten or to encourage thicker growth.

Snowberries are not human edible, but the rose hips are delicious for a vitamin C packed tea or jam. The rose flowers are tasty fresh or candied.





# Hummers: Elusive Jewels

## Tripping the light fantastic

*To “trip the light fantastic” is to dance nimbly or lightly, or to move in a pattern to musical accompaniment*

Hummingbirds are among the smallest of birds, and include the smallest existing bird species, the Bee Hummingbirds. They can hover in mid-air by rapidly flapping their wings 12–90 times per second (depending on the species). Hummingbirds can also fly backwards and sideways, and are the only group of birds able to do so. They can fly at speeds exceeding 34 miles/hour. It also has an unusual hovering pattern, and can move its wings in a figure eight pattern — a symbol for infinity.

Their heart rate can reach as high as 1,260 beats per minute. They also consume more than their own weight in nectar each day, and to do so they must visit hundreds of flowers daily. Hummingbirds are continuously hours away from starving to death, and are able to store just enough energy to survive overnight. ~ Wikipedia

Here in the Pacific northwest, our hummingbirds species number 7, including year-round inhabitants and those that simply pause here while on their migratory journey.<sup>s</sup>

**Species:** Allen’s Hummingbird (*Selasphorus sasin*)  
Anna’s Hummingbird (*Calypte anna*)  
Black-chinned Hummingbird (*Archilochus alexandri*)  
Broad-tailed Hummingbird (*Selasphorus platycercus*)  
Calliope Hummingbird (*Stellula calliope*)  
Costa’s Hummingbird (*Calypte costae*)  
Rufous Hummingbird (*Selasphorus rufus*)

The following pages have photos and info on each species plus a master list of native plants for hummers.

[⇒ More ⇒](#)



Hummingbird visitor at a feeder in Vernonia, Oregon. Photo by Nona

# Hummers: Elusive Jewels, continued

## Allen's Hummingbird (*Selasphorus sasin*)

Allen's Hummingbird is a common breeder in the coastal fog belt from California into southern Oregon. It is closely related to the more wide-ranging Rufous Hummingbird, with only subtle differences in plumage, behavior, and vocalization.

This is a fairly common spring and summer resident along the southern Oregon coast as far north as Bandon. It occurs as a very rare vagrant in other parts of western Oregon.

Allen's Hummingbird  
Photo credit: Lee Karney, USFWS



### Native plants hummers love:

- Alum Roots (*Heuchera* spp)—Flowers
- Bay (*Umbellularia californica*)—Flowers
- Bladderpod (*Isomeris arborea*)—Flowers
- Bleeding heart (*Dicentra formosa*)—Flowers

Bleeding Heart (*Dicentra formosa*)

⇒ More ⇒



# Hummers: Elusive Jewels, continued

## Anna's Hummingbird (*Calypte anna*)

Largest hummingbird in our region and the only one regularly found in Oregon in winter, during which time it is exposed to short daylengths, limited sources of food and periods of intense cold.

It is more vocal than most hummingbirds with males uttering a dry, scratchy buzz of a song that can be heard throughout the year.

It is a rare to locally uncommon summer resident west of the Cascades in interior valleys and along the coast; also along the Columbia River east to The Dalles. It occurs and probably breeds into the west Cascades at some urban developments such as Oakridge. In winter, it is uncommon to fairly common in western Oregon at lower elevations, especially where feeders are present. It is a casual winter visitor in the south Cascades.



Photo credit: Matthew Field,  
[www.photography.mattfield.com](http://www.photography.mattfield.com)



### Native plants hummers love:

Buckeye (*Aesculus californica*)—Flowers  
Columbine (*Aquilegia formosa*)—Flowers  
Flowering Sage (*Salvia* spp)—Flowers  
Gooseberry (*Ribes* spp)—Flowers

Columbine (*Aquilegia formosa*)

⇒ More ⇒

# Hummers: Elusive Jewels, continued

## Black-chinned Hummingbird (*Archilochus alexandri*)

Noteworthy as a generalist, the Black-chinned Hummingbird appears in a wide variety of habitats, including lush river bottoms, urban settings and desert canyons. Below the male's velvety black gorget is an iridescent purple band that can also look black in poor light. At rest, the wingtips are relatively broad and curved, unlike any other North American hummingbird.

A rare to locally common resident east of the Cascades, it is least common in Klamath and Lake counties. Summer habitat in eastern Oregon includes canyons, juniper woodlands, and desert riparian zones. In the foothills of the Blue and Wallowa Mountains it is found along stream bottoms and gulches. It also inhabits oak and scrub areas, open woodlands and towns.



Juvenile female

Photo credit: Steve Berardi



### Native plants hummers love:

- Honeysuckle (*Lonicera* spp.)—Flowers
- Hound's tongue (*Cynoglossum grande*)—Flowers
- Huckleberry (*Vaccinium*)—Flowers
- Indian pink (*Silene californica*)—Flowers

Honeysuckle (*Lonicera* spp)

[⇒ More ⇒](#)



# Hummers: Elusive Jewels, continued

## Broad-tailed Hummingbird (*Selasphorus platycercus*)

Perhaps the most enigmatic hummingbird found regularly in Oregon, the Broad-tailed Hummingbird has so far eluded documentation of its breeding in the state, likely due to identification uncertainties and the remoteness of its preferred habitat.

Primarily a Rocky Mountain species, its hard-to-define breeding range seems to reach its limit at Oregon's eastern edges, where reports of this beautiful and rare species arise each summer.

The relatively large adult male has a rose-red gorget and green plumage with no dorsal rufous coloration. Females and immatures are nearly indistinguishable in the field from those of the more common Rufous Hummingbird.



Broad-tailed Hummer  
Photo credit: Bill Ratcliff



### Native plants hummers love:

Island bush (*Galvezia speciosa*)—Flowers  
island mallow (*Lavatera assurgentiflora*)—Flowers  
Kinnickinnick (*Arctostaphylos uva-ursi*) Flowers  
Larkspur (*Delphinium cardinale*)—Flowers

Kinnickinnick (*Arctostaphylos uva-ursi*)

⇒ More ⇒

# Hummers: Elusive Jewels, continued

## Calliope Hummingbird (*Stellula calliope*)

This tiny jewel is the smallest breeding bird in North America and the smallest long-distance avian migrant in the world. The average weight of males is approximately 0.09 oz, about half of that of an Anna's Hummingbird, and a little more than the weight of a penny.

It breeds predominantly in mountain habitats, and despite its diminutive size, successfully withstands the chilly summer nights at high elevations. It is a common summer resident of the Blue and Wallowa mountains and other high ranges east of the Cascade summit. Spring and fall migrants are rare at lower elevations east of the Cascades.



Calliope Hummingbird

Photo credit: USDA Forest Service



### Native plants hummers love:

- Leopard Lily (*Lilium pardalinum*)—Flowers
- Manzanita (*Arctostaphylos* spp)—Flowers
- Monkeyflower (*Mimulus*)—Flowers
- Oregon grape (*Mahonia* spp)—Flowers

Tall Oregon Grape (*Mahonia aquifolium*)

[⇒ More ⇒](#)



# Hummers: Elusive Jewels, continued

## Costa's Hummingbird (*Calypte costae*)

The Costa's Hummingbird is a very rare spring and summer visitant to central and southwestern Oregon. Males are sometimes present for the entire year in the Rogue Valley. Males have been observed in canopy-free riparian habitat along Bear Creek and semi-open tall white oaks at the edge of Agate Lake.

Many of these birds go undetected in Oregon because of their similarity with other hummingbird species.



Costa's Hummingbird  
Photo credit: Alan D. Wilson,  
[www.naturespicsonline.com](http://www.naturespicsonline.com)



### Native plants hummers love:

- Penstemon (Penstemon)—Flowers
- Pink-flower currant (*Ribes sanguineum*)—Flowers
- Snowberries (*Symphoricarpos* spp)—Flowers
- Twinberry (*L. involucrata*)—Flowers

Red Flowering Currant (*Ribes sanguineum*)

⇒ More ⇒

# Hummers: Elusive Jewels, continued

## Rufous Hummingbird (*Selasphorus rufus*)

The Rufous Hummingbird is the most common and widespread of Oregon hummingbirds. This rusty-red and fearless nectar feeder is a popular yard bird, inspiring even the most modest of nature lovers to plant some northwest natives and set up a nectar feeder.

It is a common transient and breeder throughout most of western Oregon, especially in forested regions.

A 2005 Oregon State University study of Rufous Hummingbirds lead by Dr. Douglas Warrick discovered some facts about hovering, a regular part of this hummer's daily dance.



Rufous Hummingbird  
Photo credit: Mikul



### Native plants hummers love:

- Western columbine (*Aquilegia formosa*)—Flowers
- Western redbud (*Cercis occidentalis*)—Flowers
- Western sycamore (*Platanus racemosa*)—Down for nests
- Woolly blue-curls (*Trichostema lanatum*)—Flowers

Western Redbud (*Cercis occidentalis*)

[⇒ More ⇒](#)



# Hummers: Elusive Jewels, continued

*And the humming-bird that hung  
Like a jewel up among  
The tilted honeysuckle horns  
They mesmerized and swung  
In the palpitating air,  
Drowsed with odors strange and rare.  
And, with whispered laughter, slipped away  
And let him hanging there.*

- James Whitcomb Riley ,  
The South Wind and the Sun

Photo credit: Daedolus Contrib  
who says, "A hummingbird nest  
on my back porch, uploaded to  
show the obvious balancing act."



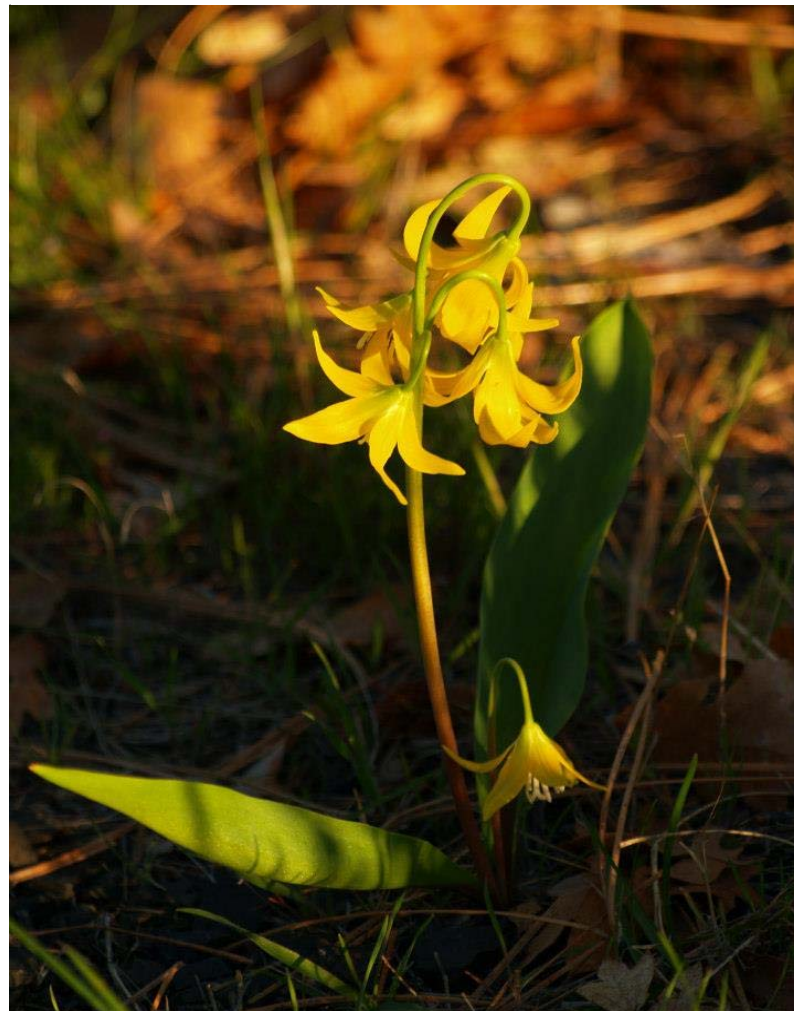
# This & That

## Notes from Jennifer

Ah, springtime in the Pacific northwest! Outside my window, it's raining and blowing--seems like anything that is not nailed down has taken flight. Those leaves from last year's Paper Birch autumn are breaking down and immersing themselves into the rich hummusy soil. The pieces that are left will be turned about by our bird friends when they get a hankering for a bug snack.

The birch flowers hop off the branches as the fresh leaves assert themselves. Such a lovely profile early in the morning when the sun begins brightening the day. The big rhodie shows touches of color, forerunners of blooms to come. The bright red azalea around the corner peeps through the Bleeding Heart for a colorful backdrop. The violets are scooting over to allow blooming bulbs their share of sunshine. The Sword Ferns unfurl new leaves, making themselves even more prominent among the rhodies as the deciduous ferns thrust their fronds upward. The diversity of the landscape is mind boggling from up close, but taking a step back to see the whole panorama elevates the scene as it blends into a glorious glimpse of an angel's viewpoint.

Recently I got an email from Janice at Marion Soil and Water Conservation District about leftover plants from their annual native plant sale. Wow! Just exactly what I needed. I made my wish list as directed and reserved a few (34) plants my garden could use--a little of this, a little of that. Soon as my order was ready I took my garden helper along for the pick up and he planted every one of those native plants right where I wanted them. About an hour after the planting was done, a gentle rain began to fall just blessing each plant with a welcome to their new homes in my garden.



*Erythronium*  
Photo by Nona

See my new plants on the next page!

Until next time,

*Jennifer*

⇒ More ⇒



# This & That, continued

Black Twinberry  
(*Lonicera involucrata*)  
Photo: Walter Siegmund



Indian Plum  
(*Oemleria cerasiformis*)



Red Elderberry  
(*Sambucus racemosa*)

Chokecherry  
(*Prunus virginiana*)  
Photo credit: Nadia Talent



Snowberry  
(*Symphoricarpus alba*)



Showy Milkweed  
(*Asclepias speciosa*)

Scouler's Willow  
(*Salix scouleriana*)



Wild Ginger  
(*Asarum caudata*)



Wood Strawberry  
(*Fragaria vesca*)

